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THE CLASSICS AND THE SCIENTIST

CHEMISTRY PROFESSOR ARGUES FOR VALUE OF LATIN AND GREEK STUDIES

The University of Colorado has recently published a bulletin on *Latin and Greek in Education*. With the exception of the writer of the introductory note the contributors are not classicists but men interested in other branches of education. They include the dean of the school of social and home service, the professor of chemistry, the dean of the graduate school, the dean of the college of engineering, the dean of the school of law, the professor of philosophy, the professor of biology, the professor of surgical pathology and serology. A part of the paper by Professor John B. Ekeley, professor of chemistry is of general interest.

"It is often assumed that scientific men lay very little stress upon the study of the classics, especially Greek, and that the scientific world considers the advantage of these studies to be very slight. I wish to say in the beginning that I do not believe this assumption to be true. At least my own experience has been quite the opposite. I have been impressed by the number of scientists of my own acquaintance who value the study of the classics, not only for the pleasure they have derived from them, but for the intellectual power which they have gained from them. A prominent mining engineer of this state has told me that these studies have been the means of giving him a viewpoint without which his success would have been materially curtailed. He goes so far as to say that they have taught him in a large measure how to use the tools of his profession. If men whose daily pursuits lie far from Greek roots and Latin verbs can sincerely make such statements, then there must be some very tangible reasons for their belief. I am glad of the opportunity to state why I believe in the early study of the classics and its continuance in the university for those contemplating a scientific or technical career. And when I speak of the classics I mean both Greek and Latin.

"No man can have a broad conception of our modern, complex life, who is without a knowledge of how that life has developed. It may be said that a study of history, of the intellectual and material growth of mankind will give such a viewpoint, but I must point out that such an understanding is very difficult, if not impossible, without

an appreciation of the life and thought of Greece and Rome. There is scarcely a phase of modern thought that has not been anticipated by these ancient peoples, and, it is safe to say, the sources of some of our most prized modern conceptions are to be found among them. How, then, can this understanding most easily be attained? The knowledge of the language of a people is the open sesame to the understanding of the life and thought of the people. He who knows German and French has the best key to the knowledge of the German and the Frenchman. One cannot study a language without at the same time involuntarily learning how the speaker of that language lived, how he thought, what his ideals were—in short, what he was. So, inasmuch as the priceless legacies of Greece and Rome touch us so closely in our everyday lives, we cannot afford to grow up ignorant of how they have come down to us.

"But setting aside the advantages accruing in a general way, how can it be said that the study of the classics makes a man a better scientist or engineer? It is very clear. Our methods of secondary education have recently suffered rather severe and just criticism from those who have observed their shortcomings. Continued additions to the curriculum of the high school, usually made up by courses which have a smattering of half a dozen sciences, have wasted the time of the students at a period when they should have been acquiring habits of study and not have been confused by being introduced to too many new conceptions. Their time has been largely wasted in acquiring hazy ideas of a few elementary principles of chemistry, a subject for which, by reason of their youth, they are hardly prepared. How much better it would be for them to exercise their minds upon some task adapted to their state of mental development.

"May I repeat, a student, properly trained in the Greek and Latin languages and in mathematics, at a period when these studies by their very nature have drilled him in habits of industry, clearness of thought, and exactness of expression, have given him a feeling of mental power, and have furnished him an invaluable foundation for a knowledge of his own language; such a student, I say, comes to the university equipped to attack successfully whatever is offered him. On the other hand, the product of some of our modern high-school methods, trained by means of a mixture of half a dozen half-baked courses in science, together with a little of this and that, feels himself overwhelmed the first month, and, unless he is an unusual person, gives up in despair.

"It therefore seems to me very clear that the supporters of the claims of the classics in the high school and the university have by far the better of the argument."

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The Classical Journal

is the official organ of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South. The Association is organized for the purpose of encouraging the development of the study of the classics; to provide a means of intercommunication between teachers of the classics—whether in the secondary schools, in the colleges, or in the universities of the territory it covers; and generally to promote a unity of thought and action in the broad field of classical teaching. Membership in the Association is open to all teachers of the classics and to others interested in classical studies who reside in the territory covered by the Association. The membership fee is \$2.00 per year, and members receive both the **Classical Journal** and **Classical Philology** without further expense.

The subscription price of the **Classical Journal** alone is \$1.50 per year; of **Classical Philology**, \$3.00 per year. The value of these journals to those interested in the classics, either as students or as teachers, cannot be measured by the cost of membership. The advantages involved in this offer should therefore appeal strongly to those who find themselves in this class.

Application for membership in the Association should be made to the Vice-President of the state in which the applicant resides (see list on page three of cover), or to the Secretary-Treasurer of the Association.

The next annual meeting of the Association will be held at Nashville, on April 2 and 3.